

Good Stories for Children

BY
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HOW A LAZY BOY WAS TURNED INTO A HORSE AND BECAME USEFUL

Archie Whix Punished Himself For Not Helping His Mother Take Care of the Big Family

HERE was a poor widow named Mrs. Eleanor Whix, who had three children. Archibald, the oldest, was about 15; Charles 12, and Elsie, the girl, was 10 years of age. Archie was an idle, careless boy, who did nothing to help his mother, but spent his time strolling in the woods with other idlers, swimming in the river in summer or building bonfires in winter while skating on the canal, wasting his time as well as wearing out his clothes, while the other children tried in every way to ease their mother's burden and assist her in maintaining their humble home. While the impoverished mother was away from home toiling at dressmaking, Elsie was housekeeper, and her mother often felt gratified to think that the house was in such good hands while she was absent, for Elsie was very clever indeed. Charles ran errands for the grocer, and often earned twenty-five cents per day. In summer the two younger children gathered berries in the woods and sold them, earning in this manner quite a sum of money—enough to clothe them properly; but Archie would never condescend to such toil. He was too proud, as well as lazy. In winter, however, they found it a difficult matter to procure enough money to buy food.

"I wish," said Elsie, one wintry day as she looked out of the window, "that we had a horse." Charley laughed. "Would we feed him on snow?" he asked. "What would we do with a horse?"

Wanted a Horse to Aid

In Making a Living

"We would use the old wagon that's standing idle all the time in the back yard," she replied.

"Why not wish for a sleigh?" inquired Charley. "I don't want the horse for fun," said Elsie. "We could hitch him into the shafts and then buy a lot of oranges and sell them about town to our summer customers."

"That's so!" exclaimed Charley. "You don't suppose I could pull that wagon around, do you?" "Of course not. It's far too heavy. No. We would have to have a horse."

Charley sighed. The landlord had been there that morning and told his mother that unless the rent was paid at once he would compel them to move out, and Charley saw no way of procuring twenty dollars. It would be terrible to have to move in such weather, and there was no money to pay for moving either. Archie came in and growled because the ice was too soft to allow any skating, but when Elsie suggested that he chop some firewood he grew very angry. Instead of chopping wood he began to draw pictures on the whitewashed wall of the kitchen, although Elsie told him that the landlord had complained of the defacement of his property that very day. Archie grinned but did not desist. He was fond of drawing these pictures, and often said that he was going to be an artist—a newspaper artist, because he thought they never had to work at all, but only go around spending money and enjoying life.

Archie said that he knew a cannaler who had a horse that was now idle because of the ice in the canal, and he thought perhaps the man would let them have the animal for a very small sum.

"Will you go and ask him?" inquired Elsie. "I really think we might make some money, for all our old customers like us, and will certainly buy our oranges to help us along."

"Go yourself," said Archie. "I'm too tired."

Charley Hurried Off to

Borrow the Animal

"I'll go," said Charley. "I know the man you mean. Perhaps he will lend us the horse, if we feed him."

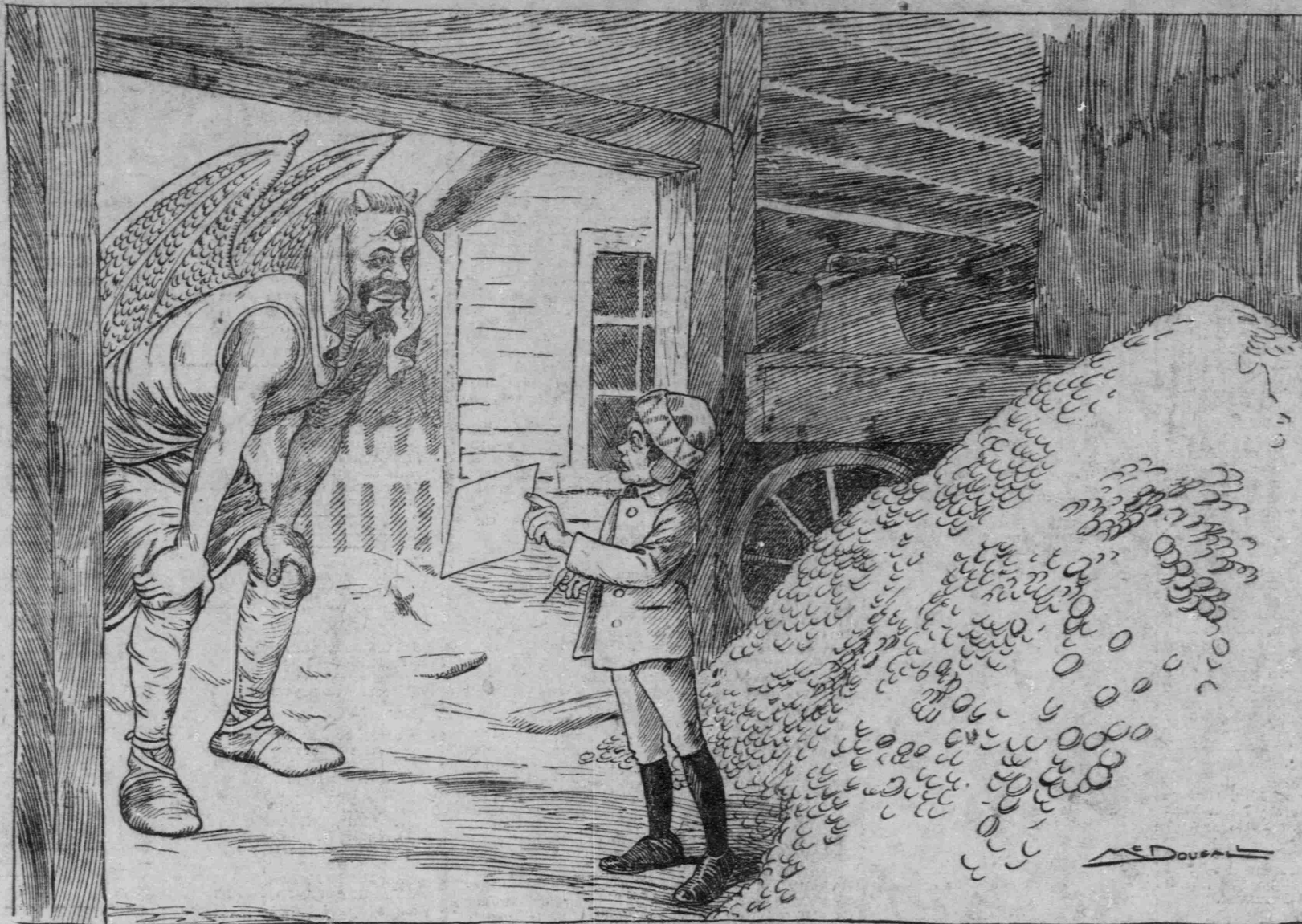
"Perhaps; but I guess not," exclaimed Archie. "I don't believe he'll let you have him at all, but he would let me have him, for he's a friend of mine."

"Then, won't you please go and ask him to lend the horse to us?" said Elsie, tearfully.

"Oh, perhaps I'll see him to-morrow," answered Archie. "There's no use traipsing all the way back there to-day."

"But we may be put out to-morrow!" cried Charley. "I will go at once."

He hurried away instantly, for he was eager to put Elsie's suggestion to the test, because he knew the grocer would let him have all the oranges he needed without paying cash for them at once. Elsie could see him plowing through the deep snow until



"A HORSE!" SHOUTED ARCHIE; "I WANT A HORSE!"

he disappeared in the woods near the canal bank.

Archie continued to disfigure the wall until he was tired, then he threw himself upon the sofa to read "Pop-Eyed Pete, the Prairie Phantom," a stirring story book which he had borrowed from another boy.

An hour passed, but Charley did not return. He was waiting for Mr. O'Keefe, the cannaler, to come home, but Elsie, of course, did not know this, and, finally, growing alarmed, she put on her hood and went to seek him, for she had a secret fear of Mr. O'Keefe, because he was a dreadfully profane man, and sometimes drank whisky. She was half afraid to venture near his house, but when she drew near and saw Charley sitting on the steps she uttered a glad little cry and ran to him, seated herself beside him and waited for the cannaler's return.

Mrs. Whix Searched a Chest

and Found the Lamp

Meanwhile Mrs. Whix came home almost prostrated, for she had met the landlord, and he had repeated his threat of turning her family out of doors at the end of the week at the very latest unless his money was forthcoming. It was a terrible prospect. The winter was but half gone, her earnings were very small and there was no way of procuring any money. She sat down and cried. This disturbed Archie very much. He asked his mother if she could not weep quietly, and as she wished to please him she desisted at once. Then she began to sort over the few objects in the house that possibly might be sold to procure some money. There was little that was of the least value, for everything costly had long ago been disposed of. An oak chest stood against the wall, and at last she opened this with an old key, sighing as she did so. Archie sprang up at once. This chest had belonged to his Uncle Tom, a sailor, who had gone to sea twelve years before and never returned, nor had his ship ever been heard from in all these years.

"Are you going to search the chest?" asked Archie, eagerly.

"Yes. I must get some money. I hate to take anything from here, but, alas, I fear poor Tom is dead, and will have no use for the things he left with me."

Archie peered into the chest as his mother took out the lost sailor's belongings. There were strange weapons, curious shells and queer, unknown objects gathered in many foreign lands—clothes and books—but she found no money. The things were scattered all over the floor when she had reached the bottom of the chest.

"I suppose some of these daggers and swords are worth something," she sighed. "I will try to sell them at the antique store."

"What's this?" asked Archie, holding up a strange little object made of copper or bronze, looking somewhat like a queer little teapot.

"That's an ancient lamp," his mother replied. "Poor Tom brought it from Bildad, in Arabia."

"Why, that's a funny old thing to call a lamp!" cried Archie, incredulously. "Where's the place to put the chimney?"

"They had no lamp chimneys in those far-off times," said Mrs. Whix. "They filled the lamp with oil and laid a piece of cotton or something in it, so that the end rested against that."

"Why, the kerosene would catch fire at once!" said Archie, examining the tiny lamp.

"They had no kerosene either," she added. "They used whale oil, I suppose, or something of the kind." She began to replace the contents of the chest, while Archie took the lamp to the window to better inspect the object. It was curiously carved with strange figures and queer, distorted marks, which he supposed were Arabic letters, and he was right, but he could not read them, of course.

Suddenly a wild thought flashed into his mind. This was an old lamp from Arabia! Why could it not be Aladdin's lamp? If not, perhaps some other magic lamp with a genie attachment, who could be summoned by rubbing it, as was the case with the celebrated lamp of Aladdin.

He started as the full thought formed in his brain, then he went to the door.

"Where are you going with that lamp?" asked his mother, with some anxiety, for she feared he would take the lamp away and sell it, as he was such a worthless little scamp that nothing was too mean for him to undertake.

"I'm just going outside, so see to see it better?" he mumbled.

It Was Really the

Lamp Aladdin Used

"You come back with it at once!" she cried, sharply, but he paid no attention to her words. Instead he went out quickly and closed the door. Then he went into the wagon shed at the end of the yard and sat down on the shafts. Had Mrs. Whix looked out of the window she could have seen all that then occurred, but she was busy replacing the sailor's effects in the old chest. It was bitter cold out there in the yard, but Archie never noticed that. He chuckled hilariously, saying:

"If it's Aladdin's lamp I'm a millionaire! If the genie comes when I rub it I'll just ask for a ton of gold dollars first piled up right here in the shed and I'll have all the things I want after that. Gee! but I'm nervous!" He hardly dared rub the lamp for fear of being disappointed if it failed. His hands trembled when he finally summoned courage to rub it slightly and then vigorously. He looked about him, and as nothing appeared his face fell. Then he smiled as he said:

"After all, I'm kinder glad the lamp ain't Aladdin's, for I was pretty scared. If a genie had come I'd have tumbled over, I'll bet."

Now, as this was really Aladdin's lamp, lost ages

ago in the Arabian desert, Archie spoke a little too soon, for although the genie took a little time to answer the summons of the lamp's master, yet of course he had to answer. As it had been so many centuries since anyone had rubbed the lamp, the genie had almost come to the conclusion that he would never be called up again, but now he came as quickly as possible. All the way from Arabia he came in one minute and stood outside of that ramshackle wagon shed before the amazed boy. The genie was a terrible object. Beside two steel-blue eyes he had another, flashing like emerald, in the centre of his forehead. A pair of arms like a man's had he and also a pair like a lion's fore legs, armed with awful claws. Wings of enormous breadth swept the snow as he came to the ground in that little back yard. A mysterious perfume filled the icy air as the genie bowed almost to the ground before Archie and said:

Genie Soon Gave Him

a Big Pile of Gold

"Benie, Magi, uplalla bimbashi, effendi swax majorem," which is Arabic for "What are the commands of the master of the lamp?"

Of course, Archie did not understand a word of this, and yet, because it was spoken in a foreign language, he immediately lost all his fear, for he felt a sort of sneaking contempt for a genie who could not speak English.

"Are you the genie of the lamp?" he asked.

The genie repeated the unknown words he had used before, at the same time seeming surprised. Then he appeared to notice that the boy was not an Arab, for he asked his question in another language, but it was all the same thing to Archie, who did not understand one word. He once more inquired as to whether the genie was the slave of the lamp, and again the genie replied in still another tongue.

"Can't you speak English?" interrogated the boy. "I don't know what you're saying. If you are a genie I want a lot of things right off!"

"Bismallah jampurtua allah omar khayyim ramadan!" exclaimed the genie impatiently, and Archie observed that he was already beginning to shiver with cold, for Arabia, as you know, is a very warm country, and even a genie cannot endure snow and ice. The boy also was growing excited and a little angry, for he feared the genie would become too impatient and disappear in a rage, thereby losing him all the benefit of the old lamp.

For some minutes the two endeavored to arrive at some understanding, but of course it was impossible to comprehend one word on either side. Suddenly an idea struck Archie, and, taking out a pencil and paper, he tried to draw a picture of his wants. His first desire being for gold, and a big pile of it, he drew a rough outline of a mound of dollars, and, while the genie waited shivering, he made several of the coins very carefully, so that there would be no mistake.

"There," said he, as he showed the drawing. "I

Got Hold of Aladdin's Lamp and Made His Wishes, Which Were Not Understood at All

want a pile, a big pile, of gold—gold—do you understand? Want it piled up right here!" he said, pointing to the inside of the wagon shed.

The genie studied the drawing for several minutes, being somewhat in doubt as to what objects were represented, then suddenly produced a gold coin and nodded inquiringly. Archie only saw that it was gold; he never looked to see whether it was United States money or Arabian, and he nodded eagerly.

The genie smiled, bowed to the ground, then pointed into the shed. Archie looked around and saw that a pile of glittering gold coins rose almost to the roof. He shouted with delight. Then, remembering that Elsie and Charley had wished for a horse, and being very proud of the ability to draw that animal easily, he quickly sketched a spirited steed upon his paper.

"Paducah mocha ben-il-a-backsheeh!" asked the genie, looking somewhat uncertainly from the picture to the boy.

"It's a horse," said Archie, much mortified, because he thought the genie did not know from the drawing what animal he had meant to depict.

"Just a plain horse—can't you see? I want you to give me a horse!" he shouted. "A horse, to me, to me!" He pointed first to the picture, repeating his words, and then to himself. The genie looked surprised and somewhat doubtful, but as Archie persisted in pointing from the picture to himself a light suddenly illumined the face of the slave of the lamp, and he smiled. He said to himself, said this genie:

Misunderstood the Boy

and Made Him a Horse

"This boy is a magician! He makes horses on paper—a thing I've never seen done, and he wishes me to change him into one of those animals. He is the master of the lamp, and his will must be obeyed." He uttered some magic words, and in the twinkling of an eyelid Archie Whix, the idle and impudent Arabian steed, was then and there turned into a handsome Arabian steed. Of course, as there could be no further orders from a dumb animal, the genie disappeared, satisfied that he had fulfilled his part. The lamp fell down upon the ground in the shed and lay there between the hoofs of the horse. The animal seemed stunned for a time, and stood as if transfixed gazing at the pile of gold, and one would have thought it was wishing the coins were corn; but really Archie, who, although dumb, was still capable of thought, was so overcome at what had occurred that he was almost incapable of motion. The dreadful fate that had overtaken him deprived him of the power to move for a long time. Then he went to the window and rubbed his nose against the frosted panes. His mother saw the horse, and in great surprise ran to the window and opened it. Archie, in dumb anguish, poked his head into the room. Just then Charley and Elsie, much disappointed because O'Keefe had refused to lend his horse to them, entered the house and saw Archie's head at the window.

"Oh, where did that lovely horse come from?" cried the little girl.

"I don't know. It was here in the yard, but how it got here I can't see," replied her mother, "for the gate is locked and barred."

"Somebody's presented him to us!" shouted Charley. "Now we can make some money!"

Now He Has a Fine

Stable and Is Useful

He ran out into the yard to look the horse over, and in two minutes had discovered the big pile of gold, but he saw at once that it was not American money at all. So strange was it that he immediately came running to me to learn what it was, and I, too, was surprised when I saw that it was coin of the time of the Queen of Sheba, for her picture was on every piece of gold.

Well, they were now rich, and they at once took a big house, with a fine stable, for the handsome horse, but instead of driving him in an orange peddler's cart they drove him in a fine carriage. And the lamp was placed in the chest again; so that when Uncle Tom returned, as he had not long after, he found it there and told them what it was; but that is another story. Some time I will tell it to you, if I don't forget about it, but meanwhile I'll just leave Archie in his unfortunate predicament, for he is far more useful as a horse than he ever was as a boy, for now he can be driven, and then he could neither be driven nor coaxed to do a thing. I am not a bit sorry for him either. WALT McDUGALL.

